

CANADIAN RELOCATION SYSTEMS, "MOVING TIMES" JUNE 2005

We get a lot of mail about pet owners having a hard time finding accommodations that accepts pets. Here are 12 steps to help you finding Pet-Friendly Rental Housing. Of course one solution is to purchase your own home and there are some insurance coverage available for pets in rental units. Ask your insurance Broker/Agency.

1. Give yourself enough time. Nobody likes the hassles involved with moving. As a pet owner you have the added responsibility of moving your pet, as well. If you are renting now, start to check ads and contact Realtors and rental agencies weeks before your lease expires. If you are contemplating buying a condominium, expect your search to take at least four to six months.

2. Understand why many housing communities reject pets. Put yourself in the shoes of a landlord, housing manager, or condominium association board for a moment: you may have had bad experiences with irresponsible pet owners who didn't safely confine their animals or pick up their feces, sneaked pets in, or left ruined carpets and drapes when they moved out. You may be worried about complaints from neighbors and wonder how you are going to deal effectively with pet owners if problems arise. All of these concerns are legitimate.

That's why a person looking for an apartment, house, or condominium must be able to sell him or herself as a responsible pet owner, someone who is committed to providing responsible pet care.

3 .Make use of available resources. Contact the humane society or animal care and control agency serving the area into which you are moving; they may be able to provide you with a list of apartments or condominiums that allow pets. If you know any Realtors, rental agents, or resident managers who own pets themselves or who share your love of animals, ask them for leads. And while there is no substitute for making a professional connection with someone who understands how important it is to you to keep your pet, look for a community apartment guidebook at the supermarket or near newspaper distribution boxes on the street. It may indicate which apartment communities allow pets, what size, and how many. In addition, be sure to check your local newspaper.

4. Recognize that it may be futile to try to sell yourself and your pet to a large rental community with a no-pets policy. You're more likely to be successful if you focus on those that say they allow most pets, allow certain pets (for example, cats or dogs weighing less than twenty pounds), or that don't say, "Sorry, no pets." Individual home and condominium owners may be easiest to persuade. Ideally, look for a community with appropriate pet-keeping guidelines that specify resident obligations. That's the kind of place that's ideal for pet owners because you'll know that other pet owners there are also committed to being responsible residents.

5. Gather proof that you're responsible. The more documentation you can provide attesting to your conscientiousness as a pet owner, the more convincing your appeal

will be to your future landlord.

6. If you encounter a no-pets policy, ask if it is the result of a negative experience with a previous resident. Addressing your landlord's prior experience may show you how to present your own request most effectively.

7. Let the landlord, manager, or condominium board know that you share any concerns about cleanliness. Point out that your pet is house trained or litter box trained. Emphasize that you always clean up after your dog outdoors and that you always dispose of your pet's waste properly.

8. Promote yourself. Responsible pet owners make excellent residents. Because they must search harder for a place to live, pet owners are more likely to stay put. Lower vacancy rates mean lower costs and fewer headaches for landlords and real estate agents. Let prospective landlords and managers know that you understand that living with a companion animal is a privilege, not a right.

9. Promote your pet. Offer to bring your pet to meet the owner or property manager, or invite the landlord to visit you and your pet in your current home. A freshly groomed, well-behaved pet will speak volumes. Emphasize that the same pride you take in caring for your pet extends to taking care of your home. Many landlords are concerned about fleas, so be sure to let your prospective landlord know that you maintain an active flea control program for your pet and home. Provide written proof that your pet is spayed and neutered and is, therefore, healthier, calmer, and less likely to create a nuisance.

Make it clear to the landlord, manager, or condominium board that you keep your cat inside and your dog under control at all times and that you understand the health and safety benefits of doing so.

If you can't arrange for a meeting, why not make a scrapbook with photos of your pampered pet in his current home? That should make a positive impression!

10. Be willing to pay a little extra. Tell your prospective landlord or resident manager that you are willing to pay an extra security deposit to cover any costs that might be incurred by your keeping a pet.

11. Get it in writing. Once you have been given permission by a landlord, manager, or condominium committee to have a pet, be sure to get it in writing. Sign a pet addendum to your rental agreement. Comprehensive agreements protect people, property, and the pets themselves. If your lease has a no-pets clause, verbal approval won't be enough. The no-pets clause should be crossed out of the lease before you sign it-be sure it has been crossed out on your landlord's copy, too.

You may be required to pay a pet deposit, some or all of which may be non-refundable. Be sure to discuss deposits and monthly pet fees in advance. And have them put into writing, too. Request a copy of any house rules pertaining to pets. Let the landlord know that you will abide by the rules set for the broader community and respect the concerns of residents who do not own pets.

12. Be honest. Don't try to sneak your pet in. Keeping an animal in violation of a no-pets rule contributes to the general inclination of landlords not to allow pets. It also can subject you to possible eviction and other legal action.

